
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5120

AN ACT CONCERNING HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSES, IMPROVING SAFE HUNTING EDUCATION, AMENDING DEFINITIONS FOR THE WILDLIFE DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY WHETHER TO TRANSFER THE CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS OF SAID DEPARTMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

SUMMARY:

This bill makes changes in various hunting, fishing, and trapping laws. It:

1. lowers, from 17 to 16, the age requirement for obtaining a fishing license;
2. changes certain hunting and fishing license fees, including reducing fees for 2013 by 50% for minors who are state residents;
3. authorizes the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to designate two days each year when a one-day sport fishing license may be issued for free;
4. requires hunting and trapping courses to include free hands-on training; and
5. defines the term “snare” for purposes of existing laws.

The bill also establishes a 13-member task force to study whether to move DEEP’s conservation functions to the Department of Agriculture (DoAG). The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Environment Committee by November 1, 2012.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Various, see below.

§ 1 – SIXTEEN YEAR-OLDS NEED FISHING LICENSE

The bill requires people age 16 and older, instead of 17 and older, to obtain a license to fish.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2013

§ 2 – HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSE FEES

The bill increases one resident combination hunting and fishing license fee and reduces two resident supersport combination license fees, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Resident Sportsman's License Fees

<i>License</i>	<i>Current Law</i>	<i>The Bill</i>
Combination (all-waters fishing and firearms hunting)	\$38	\$40
Firearms supersport (all-waters fishing, firearms hunting, deer on private land with shotgun or rifle, and wild turkey in spring on private land)	80	70
Firearms supersport (all-waters fishing, firearms hunting, migratory bird conservation stamp, and migratory bird harvest permit)	60	50

The bill also reduces the 2013 license fees for any hunting or fishing license issued to a resident age 16 or 17 by 50%, rounded to the next highest dollar (see § 5 for related changes).

By law, the DEEP commissioner must designate one day each year when no license is required for sport fishing. The bill authorizes him to designate up to two additional days each year when a one-day sport fishing license may be issued for free. The free license must be issued, at his discretion, to all members of the public or to certain age groups.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2013

§ 3 – HUNTING AND TRAPPING COURSES

The law requires the DEEP commissioner to develop and offer firearms hunting, archery hunting, and trapping instructional courses. He may designate any competent person or organization to give such instruction. The bill requires that the instruction include hands-on training in the handling of firearms or archery equipment.

Current law allows a person or organization providing instruction in trapping to charge a reasonable fee, but specifies that no fee will be charged for instruction in firearms or archery hunting. The bill instead requires that any hands-on training must be provided free to an applicant for a hunting or trapping license. But for any portion of the instruction that is not hands-on training, the applicant may choose either a (1) fee-based Internet instruction course the commissioner approves or (2) free instruction course from a person or organization the commissioner authorizes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2013

§ 4 – DEFINITION OF SNARE

The bill defines the term “snare” to mean a device, often consisting of a noose, used to kill or injure animals by entanglement, strangulation, or decapitation. The term is used throughout the hunting and trapping laws and the use of snares is prohibited in several sections (e.g., CGS §§ 26-72, 26-82, and 26-91). The bill also makes technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 5 – HUNTING, TRAPPING, AND FISHING FEES FOR MINORS

For 2013, the bill reduces any fee for hunting, trapping, or fishing permit, tag, or stamp for any resident who is under age 18 by 50% of the usual fee, rounded to the next highest dollar.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2012

§ 6 – TASK FORCE TO STUDY MOVING CONSERVATION FUNCTIONS

The bill establishes a 13-member task force to study whether to move the conservation functions described in Titles 23 and 26 of the general statutes from DEEP to DoAG. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Environment Committee by November 1, 2012. The task force terminates when it submits its report or on November 1, 2012, whichever is later.

The task force consists of (1) the DEEP and DoAG commissioners and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary, or their designees, and (2) 10 appointed members. The governor, Senate president pro tempore, and House speaker each appoint two members. The Senate and House majority and minority leaders each appoint one member. The legislative leaders' appointees may be legislators. Appointments must be made within 30 days after the bill's effective date. A vacancy must be filled by the appointing authority.

The OPM secretary or his designee is the task force chairperson and must hold the first meeting within 60 days of the bill's effective date.

The Environment Committee's administrative staff serves as the task force's administrative staff.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 27 Nay 1 (03/23/2012)